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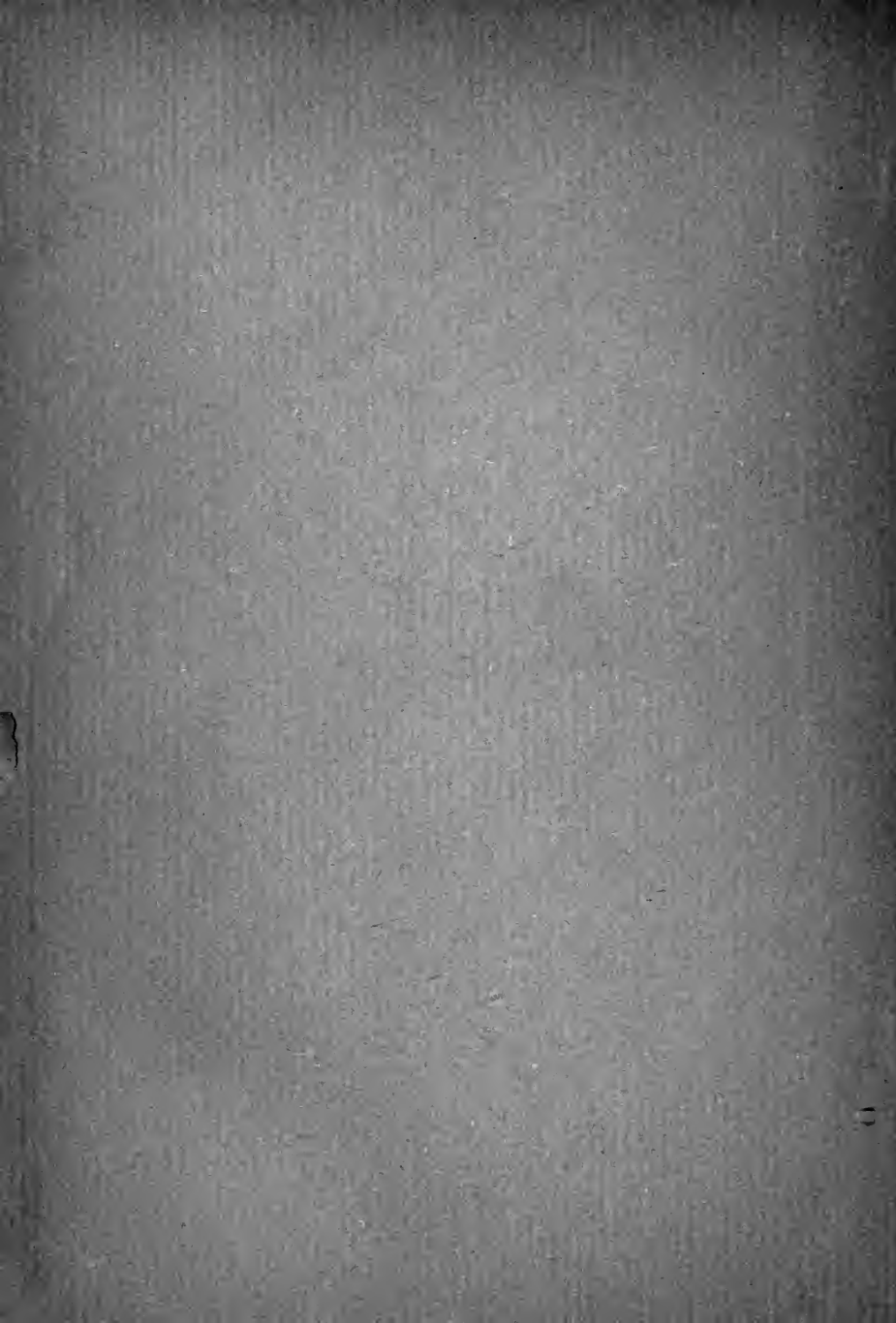
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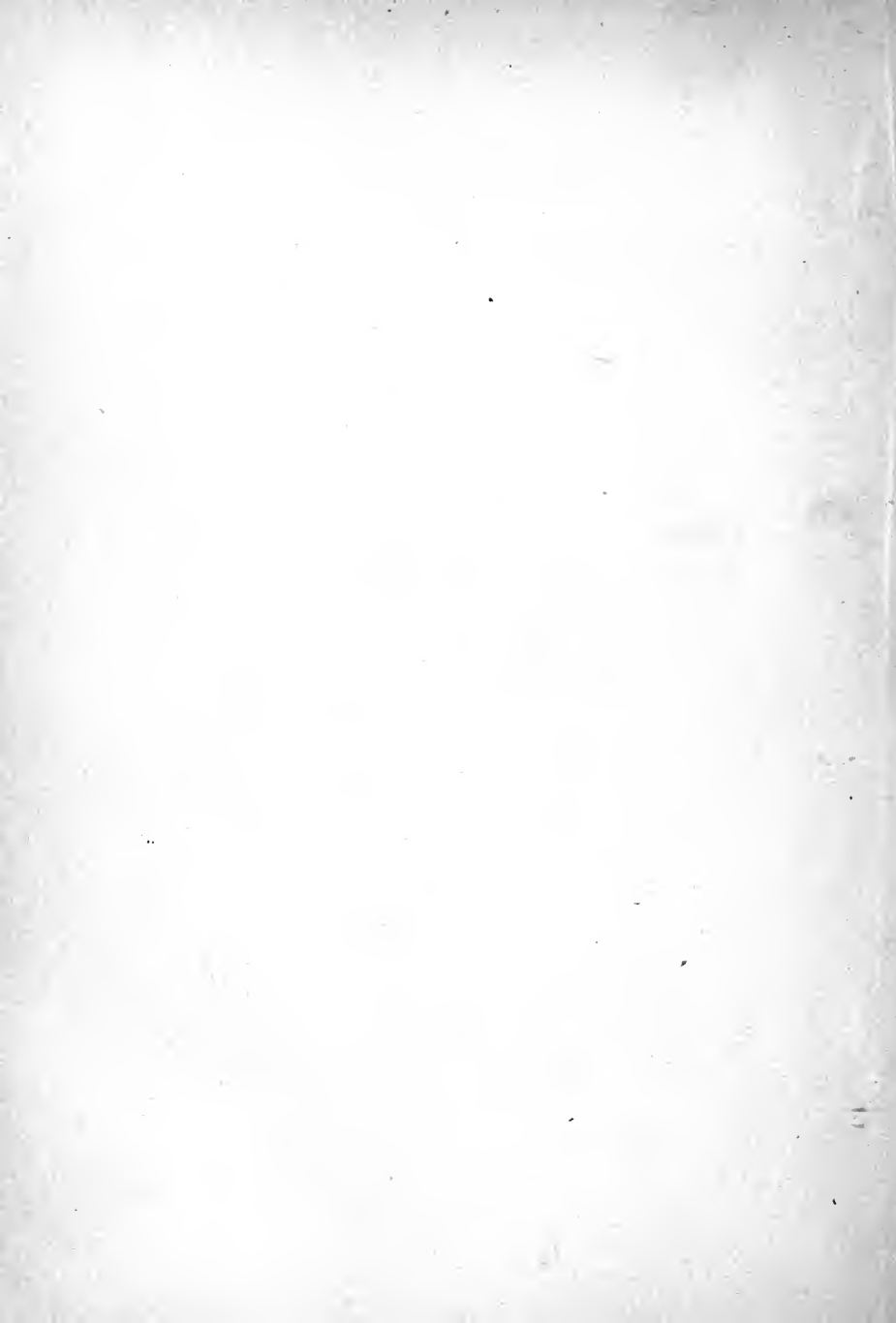
WICKHAM FLOWER F.S.A.







**DANTE**



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# DANTE

## A DEFENCE OF THE ANCIENT TEXT OF THE "DIVINA COMMEDIA"

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# DANTE.

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GIOVANNI OR GIOVANE?

KING JOHN OR THE YOUNG KING?

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## A DEFENCE OF THE ANCIENT TEXT OF THE "DIVINA COMMEDIA."

*Pistol.* Under which King? Bezonian, speak or die!

*Master Shallow.* Under King Harry.

Shakespeare, Henry IV. Part II. Act 5, sc. 3.

THE object of this treatise is to call attention to a question that appears to be of much general interest and importance, namely, whether or not an alteration that has been made during the nineteenth century in the text of Dante's immortal poem, the "Divina Commedia," ought to be permitted: or whether the text, be it right or wrong—historically—ought not rather to remain unaltered, and exactly as we see it in the first editions of the poem that were printed in the year 1472, and in all succeeding editions till at the beginning of the present century the alteration about to be referred to was made.

The last line but seven of Canto XXVIII. of the "Inferno" as it appears in all the books that were printed throughout the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and the early part of the nineteenth centuries, is this :

"Che diedi al *Re Giovanni* mai conforti,"  
that is :

"Who gave to *King John* bad counsels."

But in disregard of the books certain commentators of the present century, commencing with Ginguenè, in 1811, and ending in 1889 with Dr. Edward Moore, the author of "Contributions to the Textual Criticism of the 'Divina Commedia,'" have altered the text to

"Che al *Re giovane* diedi i ma' conforti,"  
that is :

"Who gave to the *young King* bad counsels,"  
(which is the alteration of Ginguenè and his followers) or

"Che diedi al re giovan'i mai conforti,"  
(which is the alteration of Dr. Moore and those who follow him).

These commentators, while all adopting the word "*giovane*" instead of "*Giovanni*,"

differ both as to their reasons for the alteration of the word, and as to the right position of other words in the line, some, the earlier of them, putting the word *diedi* as the fifth word in the line, some placing it the second. Some considering, as Dr. Moore does, that Dante wrote the word "giovane" originally, and that it was altered by careless copyists to "Giovanni;" others, as Mr. Butler, that Dante wrote "Giovanni" originally and afterwards somehow (perhaps as the result of reading Bertrand's poems) got the name "giovane" right.

But the point that all the "restorers" of the text, if one may so call them, are agreed on, is that Dante's knowledge of the poetry of the troubadours, and of the facts of history, make it quite inconceivable that he should have written that Bertrand de Born gave to King John, the fourth and youngest son of King Henry II., bad counsels to rebel against his father, whilst it is matter of notoriety that Bertrand was the friend and counsellor of the King's eldest son "Prince Henry," whose rebellion against his father is well known. From this they

infer that Dante really wrote the word "giovane," Prince Henry being commonly known from 1172, when he was for the second time crowned King in his father's lifetime, till 1183, when he died, as "the Young King"—Rex filius—Re Giovane—Rei Jove. It was he, they say, to whom Dante must have intended to refer, and so, as they imagine, he wrote of him as "Re Giovane" the "Young King."

The commentators who are responsible for the alteration of the text, commencing with Ginguenè, include many persons famous as students of the poetry of Dante, among them, to mention the names of only a few, for they are a large and apparently increasing company, Arrivabene, Lord Vernon, Mr. W. W. Vernon, William Rossetti, Dr. John Carlyle, Mr. A. J. Butler, Dr. Edward Moore and Signor Fraticelli (the author of an edition of the "Divina Commedia" much in use in England as a school book, a book for students, and so the more dangerous if it be found to contain anything that is spurious or wrong); and as everything of importance that has been

written by others in favour of the alteration appears to be comprised in Dr. Moore's treatise, it is proposed to deal point by point with the arguments and reasoning of Dr. Moore.

The passage under consideration is one of the finest and most impressive in Dante's magnificent poem. In it the famous troubadour and Provençal poet Bertrand de Born, the intimate friend and companion of the children of King Henry II., standing at the bridge's foot—makes his confession to Dante and Virgil standing with him, on the hill side. He confesses to them the crime of inciting a son to rebel against his father, for which he is doomed to wander through the realms below, a headless figure, carrying, as a lantern, his own head. And, in the words following—spoken by Dante—the story is told :

“ Ma io rimasi a riguardar lo stuolo,  
E vidi cosa, ch' io avrei paura,  
Sanza più pruova, di contarla solo ;  
Se non che coscienza m' assicura,  
La buona compagnia che l' uom francheggia,  
Sotto l'osbergo del sentirsi pura.  
Io vidi certo, ed ancor par ch'io 'l veggia,  
Un busto senza capo andar, sì come

Andavan gli altri della trista greggia.  
 E 'l capo tronco tenea per le chiome  
 Pesol con mano, a guisa di lanterna ;  
 E quel mirava noi, e dicea : O me !  
 Di sè faceva a sè stesso lucerna,  
 Ed eran due in uno, e uno in due :  
 Com' esser può, quei sa, che sì governa.  
 Quando diritto a piè del ponte fue ;  
 Levò il braccio alto con tutta la testa  
 Per appressarne le parole sue,  
 Che furo : Or vedi la pena molesta  
 Tu che, spirando, vai veggendo i morti :  
 Vedi s'alcuna è grande, come questa.  
 E perchè tu di me novella porti ;  
 Sappi ch' i' son Bertram dal Bornio, quelli  
 Che diedi al *Re Giovanni* mai conforti  
 I' feci 'l padre e'l figlio in sè ribelli :  
 Achitofel non fe' più d' Absalone  
 E di David co' malvagi pungelli.  
 Perch' io partii così giunte persone,  
 Partito porto el mio cerebro, lasso !  
 Dal suo principio, ch' è 'n questo troncone.  
 Così s'osserva in me lo contrappasso."

Canto XXVIII., line 112.

In deference to a suggestion that has been made to me, but with extreme diffidence as to how far it may be right to attempt to put anything out of Dante's poem into English verse, I have rendered the above passage from the "Inferno" into English as follows.

The scene is described partly by reference to remarks made by Virgil to Dante in the next canto.

And as the troop passed onward I stood still  
And saw a sight most sad, most terrible,  
A sight I scarce dare tell of, but that he  
Who hath good conscience and a mind that's pure  
Freely may speak of aught that he may see,  
For as I gazed, I saw—it haunts me still—  
A headless figure, wandering side by side  
With other shadows.—In its hand it bore  
The head that once it carried, ere its fall,  
And as a lantern bright the eyes shone forth  
And gazed at us with sad mysterious light,  
And lit the ground on which its footsteps fell.  
And with its lips it cried in pain, "O me!"  
The shadow made a light unto itself,  
They two were two in one, and one in two.  
How that may be He knows who wills it so.  
When he had reached the bridge's foot, he turned,  
And held on high, with outstretched arms, the head,  
That better might the words be heard to us  
Who stood above him, spell-bound on the hill:  
"Behold," said he, "the pains that I endure!  
Thou who with breath of life dost watch the dead  
Look at me now, ye twain who pass me by,  
Say—was there ever seen such pain as mine,  
And that thou may'st my story tell to those  
Who still the world inhabit, know that I  
Am Bertrand Lord of Hautefort and de Born;  
Who to King John gave counsels that were bad,  
I made the father and the son to fight;

Just as Ahitophel in days of old  
 Counsell'd the son of David, Absalom,  
 To fight against his father,—so did I;  
 And since I parted thus the closest friends  
 My head, for ever parted from its source,  
 I as a lantern carry—thus pursues  
 Swift retribution on the heels of crime."

"Che diedi al re Giovanni mai conforti  
 I' feci 'l padre e' l figlio in sè ribelli."

"Who gave to King John bad counsels,  
 I made the father and the son to fight together."

These are the words one reads in the first three printed editions of the poem.

In the edition of Foligno, 1472, the words are:

"Che diedi alre Giovanni mai conforti."

In the edition of Mantua, 1472,

"Che diedi al Re Giovanni mai conforti."

In the edition of Jesi, 1472:

"Che dedi are Giovanni · imali cōforti ·."

And from the first the word "Giovanni" remained printed in all the books down to the beginning of the present century.

So much for the books.

As for the manuscripts—in which form alone the poem was known from about the



year 1300 to 1320, when it was composed by Dante, till 1472, when it was first printed—the overwhelming majority of the manuscripts contain the same word “Giovanni.” In fact Dr. Moore commences his argument by the very candid admission that the reading which he prefers of “Giovane” is almost devoid of manuscript support.

What then are the arguments that in disregard of all the books, and the overwhelming majority of the manuscripts, can justify an alteration of the text of the poem?

Upon the pages of all the books the words “Re Giovanni” peacefully slumbered for considerably more than three centuries—no one dreaming of disturbing them—till suddenly they were rudely subjected by modern commentators possessed of far greater knowledge of the facts of history than existed in Italy in Dante’s time, to the full blaze of the electric light of the nineteenth century; and by that strange and uncongenial light these commentators have disturbed and altered the text of the ancient poem, which ought to be looked at and

judged of only by the dim light of the fourteenth century, with due regard to such imperfect knowledge of the facts of history as alone existed in France and Italy at that time.

As Mr. Butler, who agrees with the alteration of the text, fairly puts it, there is no reason to think that Dante's knowledge of the history of the twelfth century was any better than that of Villani, an historian of about his own time—and what Villani believed will presently be seen.

Having said thus much by way of preface to this inquiry, it may be convenient if we first set out the facts that appear to be necessary for the elucidation of the question with such comments as arise upon them, and then consider what inferences should fairly and reasonably be drawn from the facts.

In the month of May, 1152, Henry Fitz-Empress (son of the Empress Maud) Duke of Normandy and Count of Anjou, afterwards (in 1154) King Henry II. of England, married Eleanor (Alienor) Duchess of Aquitaine (by right of descent Countess of Toulouse) and Countess of Poitiers. Henry's

father was Geoffrey Plantagenet, Geoffrey le Bel Count of Anjou ; his grandfather was Fulk Count of Anjou and afterwards King of Jerusalem, and his great grandfather was Fulk le Rèchein, or the Quarreller—whose eldest daughter, Ermengarde, was the first wife of Eleanor's grandfather, William Count of Poitiers and Duke of Aquitaine, the famous crusader, poet and troubadour. And by King Henry's marriage to Eleanor, the great country of Aquitaine, including Gascony, became annexed to the English crown.

Bertrand de Born was a Lord of Gascony,<sup>1</sup> his castle was Hautefort—Alta forte is Dante's word for it—in the country of Perigord, in the midst of the great forests east of the town of Perigeux.

There were five sons of King Henry and Queen Eleanor, and the dates of their births are of importance. William was born in 1153 and died in 1155; Henry, known in history as the "Young King," was born in 1155 and died in 1183; Richard Cœur de

<sup>1</sup> A troubadour and one of the most famous of the poets of Provence.

Lion was born in 1157; Geoffrey in 1158; and John was born on the 24th of December 1166. There is no evidence as to the age of Bertrand de Born, but he was probably of about the same age as the three eldest of the king's sons with whom and their father he always appears, from his poems, to have been on exceedingly intimate terms.

It is a remarkable fact, and one that does not appear to have been noticed by any of the commentators, that although Bertrand de Born, in his poems, frequently refers to the King's youngest sons, Richard and Geoffrey, and to the King himself, and even to Prince John, by their Christian names and nicknames, he never on any occasion save one, and then only incidentally, mentions the Christian name of Prince Henry, but speaks of him only and always as "Rei Jove," "the Young King," or, conjointly with his brothers, as *Marinier*, the Seaman. The following are instances—some out of many—of the way in which the King and his sons are spoken of in the poems of Bertrand de Born.

The King is spoken of as "lo reis," "Mo

Senhor lo rei," "lo reis Henrics," and "Mo  
mal Bel Senhor." Thus:

"E puois *lo reis e' l coms Richartz.*"

"M' an perdonat lor mals talans."

"De *mo Senhor lo rei* annat

Conosc que an siei filh pechat."

"Puois Esandu a tornat debesvei

*Lo reis Henrics e mes en son destrei.*"

"Papiols, mon chantar recor

En la cort mo mal Bel Senhor."

Prince Richard is spoken of as "· l coms  
Richartz," and "Oc e no" (possibly because  
he had a way of giving a downright answer,  
yes or no, to all questions put to him) and  
"lo reis Richartz." Thus:

"Adoncs vuolh un sirventes far

Tal que' *l coms Richartz l' entenda.*"

"Lo reis Felips ama la pais

Plus que 'l bos hom de Tarantais."

"*En oc e no* vol guerra mais

Plus que no fetz us de ls Algaïs."

"Ves mon *Oc e No* t'avanta

Papiols

Quar sieus es Bristols

E Nortensems e Susest

E Londres e Titagrava

E Carais

E Roans"

E venra l reis galhartz e pros  
 Que' anc *lo reis Richartz* no fo taus.

---

Prince Geoffrey is spoken of as "lo coms Jaufres," and "Rassa," which probably means, the extortioner or usurer, thus :

"*Lo coms Jaufres*, cui es Bresilianda  
 Volgra, fos primiers natz,  
 Quar es cortes, e fos en sa comanda  
 Reiesmes e duchatz."

---

"*Rassa*, *rics hom* que re no dona  
 Ni acuolh ni met ni no sona."

---

"*Rassa vilana tafura*  
 Plena d' enjan e d' usura  
 D' orguolh e de desmesura."

---

Of Prince John, Bertrand speaks as  
 "Johan ses terra" (John Lackland) thus :

"De mo senhor lo rei annat  
 Conosc que an siei filh pechat,  
 Que de 'l sojorn d' Englaterra  
 L'an aoras dos ans lonhat;  
 De · l tot lo · n tenh per enjanat  
 Mas quan de *Johan ses Terra*."

translated thus :

"Of my Lord the old King  
 I know that his sons sin against him.  
 That from any stay in England

They have deprived him now these two years,  
He is held to have been cheated by them all  
Save by *John Lack-Land*."

It was just at this time that the King was kept away from England for a little more than two years by the troubles his sons occasioned him, viz.: from March 4, 1182 till June 10, 1184.

But while all his brothers and their father the King are always referred to by Bertrand by their Christian names and nicknames, Prince Henry the "Young King" is always, save the one occasion that has been mentioned, spoken of as "Jove rei" or "lo jove rei Engles" or—possibly, but this is not certain—conjointly with his brothers, as "Marinier," never once by his Christian name, Henry, or in any way that would indicate what his Christian name was, thus:

"Papiols, e tu vai viatz

A 'l *jove rei*

Diras que trop dormir no 'm platz,"

that is, "Papiols, go thy way to the young King and tell him, that he sleeps too much to please me."

"Quar n'ai razo tan novela e tan granda  
De *l jove rei* qu'a fenit sa demanda."

---

*“ Lo reis joves s’a pretz donat  
De Burcs tro qu’en Alamanha.”*

The following are the last three stanzas of the “*planh*,” plaint or dirge that Bertrand composed in memory of his friend, the young king, one of the most beautiful, as it is one of the saddest and truest songs that ever yet was sung by a friend of a friend who has gone before him. The construction of this masterpiece of Provençal poetry shows at once the consummate skill of the poet, and puts him beyond the praise awarded him by Dante in the “*De Vulgari Eloquentia*.” The repetition of the same words at the end of the 1st, 5th, and 8th lines of each stanza will be noticed. It is a peculiarity of this form of Provençal poetry, and as used in this poem it impresses one with the feeling of sadness and solemnity that is produced by the sound of a minute gun or a passing bell.

*“ Estenta mortz, plena de marrimen  
Vanar ti potz que ’l melhor chavalier  
As tout a·l mon qu’anc fos de nula gen,  
Quar non es res qu’a pretz aia mestier,  
Que tot no fos e·l jove rei engles  
E fora mielhs, s’a dieu plagues razos  
Que visques el que maint autre enoios  
Qu’anc no feiron a·ls pros mas dol et ira.*



D'aquest segle flac, ple de marrimen,  
 S'amors s'en vai, son joi tenh menzongier,  
 Que re no i a que no torn en cozen,  
 Totz jorns veuzis e val mens huoi que hier,  
 Chascus si mir e '*l jove rei engles*,  
 Qu' era de 'l mon lo plus valens de'ls pros;  
 Ar 'es anatz sos gens cors amoros,  
 Don es dolors e desconortz et ira.

Celui que plac pe'l nostre marrimen  
 Venir e'l mon nos traire d'encombrier  
 E receup mort a nostre salvamen,  
 Com a senhor humil e drechurier  
 Clamem merce, qu'a '*l jove rei engles*  
 Perdo, si'lh platz, si com es vers perdos,  
 E'l fassa estar ab honratz companhos  
 Lai on anc dol non ac ni aura ira."

In English, as translated by Mr. Rowbotham, but with a slight alteration, thus:

"Death, cruel death, so plenteous of woe,  
 Now canst thou boast t' have won the victory  
 O'er the best prince whom chivalry can show,  
 For nought on earth could offer rivalry  
 To him our Master, the '*Young English King*'  
 Ah! if but God by reason could be bent,  
 How better far that life to him be lent  
 Than to men rude the workers of despair.

"If from this age so plenteous of woe,  
 Love perisheth, alack! then joy, good-bye!  
 Things will to worse proceed for evermore,  
 Each day will see a new calamity:

For in our loved and lost ‘ *Young English King* ’  
 Each man doth see his own prefigurement,  
 Our prince, for every virtue excellent,  
 Who now hath died and left to us despair.

“ Now then to Him who for our primal woe  
 Came to the world in sweet nativity,  
 And suffered death and torment here below,  
 To Him, our Lord and Monarch, let us cry  
 That to our ‘ *young and lovely English King* ’  
 He may vouchsafe full pardon permanent  
 And take him to his heavenly tenement  
 Where is no woe nor suffering nor despair.”

In one instance, only one, Bertrand mentions incidentally the name of the young king, and he does so in a way that might easily escape attention ; thus in the Sirvente No 6 in Dr. Stimming’s Edition of the poems, “ D’un Sirventes no’m chal bar lon hor ganda,” he says :

De ‘l Jove rei qu’ a fenit sa demanda  
 So frair Richart puois sos pairs lo comanda :  
     Tan es forsatz !  
 Puois n’ A’enrics terra no te ni manda,  
     Sia reis de’ls malvatz ! ”

That is :

“ As for the young King who has given up his claim  
 To his brother Richard because his father so ordered  
 him.

Thus was he humiliated !

Since A'enrics (*Henry*) possesses no longer either  
country or power

Let him be the King of the Cowards ! ”

Assuming that Dante had, as judging from what he says in the “*De Vulgari Eloquentia*” about the poetry of Bertrand de Born was, in all probability, the case—a perfect knowledge of Bertrand’s poetry—it would still be impossible for him to learn from it either the Christian name of the young king or the fact—for the fact in no way appears by, or is fairly to be inferred from, anything Bertrand ever wrote—that Bertrand incited or was responsible for the rebellion of the King’s sons against their father. Upon both these points he would clearly have had to get his information elsewhere, and there can be little doubt he got it in fact from the Provençal biography of Bertrand de Born, for though, as will presently be shown, the names of the persons who were concerned in the rebellions of King Henry’s sons against their father, and the circumstances of these rebellions have been recorded by many historians, no other writer than this Provençal biographer, or persons who afterwards adopted his story, has, so far

as I have been able to ascertain, ever asserted that Bertrand either instigated or was any party to these rebellions. The charge against him appears to rest upon the assertion of the Provençal biographer alone.

This biography, written in Bertrand's own language, in his own country (and not improbably by Hugh of St. Cyr, the troubadour who wrote the lives of many of his fellow poets, at about Bertrand's own time), will be found bound up with his poems both in the great work of Raynouard upon the poetry of the Troubadours, and also in Dr. Stimming's edition of the poems, and the remarkable similarity of the words in which the supposed crime of Bertrand in inciting the young king to rebellion is related, both by the Provençal biographer and by Dante in the passage under consideration, leads one to suppose that in all probability the Provençal biography was in Dante's hands when he wrote the "Inferno," for in it the incitation to rebel is stated shortly thus:

"E fetz mesclar lo paire e'l filh d'Englaterra."

Dante in Canto XXVIII., line 136, states the facts equally shortly and in the same words, thus :

“Io feci il padre e il figlio in se ribelli.”

It appears then to be highly probable that in writing as he did Dante had the Provençal biography before him and adopted its very words.

The question then arises—of what value was this Provençal biography as history? The answer is none whatever, for in the very same sentence in which the biographer attributes to Bertrand the crime of inciting the young king to rebel, he tells us an untrue and ridiculous story of the young king having met with his death through a “cairel” shot at him from a castle of Bertrand de Born! While all the world knows that he died quietly in his bed of a fever in the Château of Martel that belonged, not to Bertrand de Born, but to the Vicomte de Turenne—Martel being a little town in Gascony south-east of Perigeux.

In an admirable criticism of the biography Dr. Stimming, after pointing out many palpably false statements in it, says in con-

clusion "everything in this biography is either uncertain or untrue." For my own part I think it highly probable that when the biographer wrote of the young king who was killed by a "cairel" in a castle of Bertrand de Born, he had in his mind the King's second son, King Richard, who in the year 1199 was killed by a poisoned arrow or dart at the castle of Chaluz in the Limousin not far from Bertrand's castle of Hautefort. He may also not improbably have been thinking of Richard's rebellions against his father, which were more frequent and more serious than Henry's. At any rate it is certain that no reliance whatsoever can be placed upon any statements of his.

"Tan entro'l joves reis fo mortz *d'un cairel* en un chastel d'en Bertran de Born" says the Provençal biographer—that is, "until at last the young king was killed by a bolt shot from a cross-bow in a castle of Bertrand de Born."

For this word "cairel," quadrello, quarrel, signifies a bolt shot from a balista—thus:

“Trazon ab arbalestas *los cairels* empennatz ”

*Marcabrun.*

that is:

“With the balistas (cross-bows) they throw winged darts.”

“Etrai *cairels* trenchans per ben ferir.”

*Gaucelm Faidit.*

“And to strike well we draw three cutting darts.”

“Met en la corde un grand *carrel* d’acier.”

*Ancient Catalan.*

And it is important to bear this in mind in connection with later versions about to be referred to of the same idle story both in Italy and France.

This then—the Provençal biography—was almost certainly (for the biographies of the troubadours appear to have been bound up with their poems, and to have been written for the purpose of explaining them) the story about the young king and Bertrand de Born that was in Dante’s hands when he wrote the passage we are considering. And for hundreds of years, certainly till the year 1596, and very likely later,—it appears to have been a popular but erroneous belief both in Italy and France (1) that the King’s

eldest son, the "Young King," was named John, and (2) that he was killed by a "cairel" when fighting against his father in a castle of Bertrand de Born.

For in the well-known and famous commentary upon the "*Divina Commedia*" published by Landino at Florence in the year 1480, we are told this extraordinary story—apparently taken, partly at any rate, from the Provençal biography—of the young king and Bertrand de Born:

"And some people say that Bertrand de Born was an Englishman, others that he was a Gascon. He was intrusted with the guardianship of John—who was surnamed the young (*giovane*)—the young son of Henry King of England. He was brought up in the Court of the King of France. . . . Finally he made war against his father, and in battle was wounded to death!"

What, after reading this, is one to think of the knowledge of the facts of English history that existed in Italy as late as the end of the fifteenth century—nearly 200 years later than Dante's time?

In the middle of the next century, A.D.



1544, another very famous commentator upon the "Divina Commedia," Velutello, wrote the following account of the young King and Bertrand de Born:

"Bertrand de Born was appointed by King Henry to be the Governor of his son John, surnamed the Young, at the Court of the King of France and he was counselled by Bertrand to make war against his father. And with a great army King Henry besieged him in the Castle of Hautefort—Alta-forte—and issuing forth from the castle to fight he was wounded to death by one who discharged at him, from behind, a balista!"

Very famous books in their time were these splendid editions of the "Divina Commedia" with the commentaries of Landino and Velutello. They are proof enough of the erroneous beliefs that were held in Italy of the facts of English history in and long after Dante's time, but in truth this ignorance of history was not confined to Italy, for in France—at the Court of the King of France—as far after Dante's time as the end of the sixteenth century, a translation of the poem into French was speci-

ally made by the Abbé Grangier, the Court Chaplain, for the use of King Henry IV. A very beautiful little book it is—issued under the authority of Letters Patent signed by the King in Council at Laon on the 8th August, 1594, in which the story of Bertrand de Born and the young king is thus told:

“This Bertrand was appointed Governor to John, son of Henry King of England, and John was brought up in the Court of the King of France, and was beyond measure a spendrift and a prodigal, at which his father the King much grumbled, not being able to satisfy his great expenses. At last his father thought of assigning to him a part of his kingdom, on the revenues of which he might live honourably. But the revenue not being equal to his desire of spending, Bertrand de Born counselled him to return to England and make war upon his father, and then King Henry, warned of his designs, besieged him with a great army in the Castle of Hautefort. And John, going out one day to fight, was wounded to death by one who shot him from behind with a scorpion—which the Latins call a balista!”

This, though it is almost beyond one's powers of belief, was actually written, and printed, at the Court of the King of France, close upon 300 years after Dante had died!

But in truth it was not only in Italy and France that ignorance of the facts of English history prevailed in the Middle Ages. In England the Monk of Chester, one of the great historians of the fourteenth century, wrote in the "Polychronicon" thus of the rebellion of 1173:

"Therefore arose against him (King Henry II.) *three strong men and mighty*—his own three sons—with the king of France; but when King Henry had visited meekly Thomas the Martyr's tomb, William, King of Scotland, and the two Earls of Chester and of Lincoln, were taken at Alnwick," etc., etc. *Three strong men and mighty*—of the respective ages of 14, 15, and 17 years of age!

And some 200 years later, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, another great English historian, John Stow, wrote in the "Annales of England" of the same rebellion thus:

“ There took part against the father (King Henry II.) Lewes, King of France, William, King of Scots, Henry, Geffrey, and *John*, his sons, Robert, Earl of Leicester, Hugh of Chester and others.” Here the joining in the rebellion of 1173 is expressly attributed—erroneously—to Prince John, who was at that time a child of six years old. The above are but two instances selected at haphazard out of endless mistakes in history of which the old books are full.

It will be noticed that in all the commentaries that have been referred to, it is distinctly stated that Bertrand de Born was the guardian or governor and counsellor of John, son of Henry II. King of England, and who was surnamed “giovane”—the young—and that he was *counselled* by Bertrand to make war against his father, a point that may be of much importance a little later on when we come to consider the possibility of Dante having intended to refer in Canto XXVIII. of the “Inferno” to the King’s youngest son John.

With these facts before one, and with the knowledge that historians of Dante’s time,

Villani and others, wrote of the King's eldest son as John, it would indeed have been strange if Dante, assuming that he intended to speak of the eldest son, had written of him as other than "Giovanni." There appears then to be no good reason to doubt that the word "Giovanni" was written advisedly, though of course, if the King's eldest son is the person referred to, it is, historically, wrong.

It seems clear that the ancient commentators (and in all probability Dante with them) were under the erroneous belief that the Christian name of King Henry's eldest son, the "young king," was John. And there can be little doubt that Dante was equally mistaken in supposing that it was through the evil counsels of Bertrand de Born that the son of King Henry (whichever son he referred to) was induced to rebel against his father. For in no book of history—of England, Italy, or France—does the name of Bertrand appear as having had anything to do with the crime attributed to him in the "Inferno," save in the Provençal biography that has been referred

to, the worthlessness of which has been shown.

Whilst the great books of history, such as the Abbot of Peterboro's Chronicle, and the Chronicles of Ralph de Diceto, the history of Matthew Paris (adopting the Chronicles of Roger of Wendover), and the "Rerum Gallicarum Scriptores" and Lord Lyttelton's life of King Henry, are all entirely silent as to the name of Bertrand de Born; these writers state in great detail the circumstances of the various differences and quarrels that arose between the King and his sons from the day when Prince Henry the young king—then but seventeen years old—was crowned in his father's lifetime in the year 1172, till the day of his death in 1183. These writers give the names of the persons by whom the mind of the young king was turned against his father. The Abbot of Peterboro' gives them emphatically thus:

"Hujus autem nefandæ proditionis auctores exstiterunt Ludowicus Rex Franciæ, et (ut à quibusdam dicebatur) Ipsa Alienor Regina Angliæ et Radulfus de Faia Præ-

dicta quidem Regina eo tempore habuit in custodia sua Ricardum Ducem Aquitainæ, et Gaufridum comitem Britannia Filios suos, et misit eos in Franciam ad Juvenem Regem fratrem illorum ut cum eo essent contra Regem patrem ipsorum."

That is :

"And the authors of this infamous treachery (the great rebellion of 1173 of the King's sons against their father) were Louis King of France and, as by some was said, Eleanor herself the Queen of England and (her uncle) Ralph de Fay. And the Queen had at that time under her charge, Richard, Duke of Aquitaine, and Geoffrey, Count of Brittany, her sons. And she sent them both into France, to the young king their brother, that with him they might be arrayed against their father the King."

Subsequently a long list of the names of the adherents to the King's sons in the rebellion is given by the Abbot of Peterboro', Abbas Benedictus. Bertrand's name is not amongst them. The principal rebels in addition to the Queen herself were her uncle, Ralph de Fay,—Radulfus de Faia—

the Seneschal of Aquitaine, and another great lord of Aquitaine, Hugh of St. Maur.

Vaissette, the great historian of Languedoc and the south of France, first mentions Bertrand's name in connection with the last sad contest between the King and his three sons, Henry, Richard, and Geoffrey, in the course of which the young king died in June, 1183. But there was nothing in those contests upon which a charge could be made against Bertrand of having made the father and the son to fight with one another, for the facts of 1182 and 1183 were that the great lords of Aquitaine—and Bertrand with them—having in the year 1182 broken out into open rebellion against Richard, Duke of Aquitaine, on account of his extreme cruelty and exactions, the young king chose to join the insurgents. And then King Henry took an army into Aquitaine to the assistance of Richard, and eventually laid siege to the castle of Limoges, in which Prince Henry and his friends were confined. Prince Henry and Bertrand were thus the attacked parties, not conspirators, and in the fighting that



ensued after the siege of Limoges, until the Prince died a few weeks later—in the Chateau of Martel—Bertrand did no more than stand loyally by his party and his friend.

It seems then, that if it were allowable to alter Dante's poem by making it consistent with the actual facts of *history*, it might be necessary to strike out of it the whole of the splendid story of Bertrand de Born! "Fiat veritas ruat poema!" Surely most of us would prefer, even at the expense of historical accuracy, to preserve intact the text of the poem.

We next have to consider, point by point, the arguments that have been adduced by Dr. Moore and those who agree with him, in favour of the alteration of the text, and these commence with the assertion that "of course the word 'giovane' is historically correct."

If by this is meant no more than that the word "giovane" denotes the King's eldest son—Prince Henry—known in and after 1172 as the "Young King," it may be conceded that the word "giovane," as applied

to any son of Henry II., in the language of history means, and means only, Prince Henry, the eldest son of the King.

But this leaves untouched the two important points that have to be dealt with: (1) Did Dante intend to refer expressly to King John, the youngest son of King Henry? (2) If intending to refer to Prince Henry—the Young King—did he or did he not expressly refer to him as John, believing that the young king and John were one and the same person, that John was surnamed the young—"Giovanni il cui soprannome fu giovane figliuolo d'Arrigo Re d'Inghilterra."

For if Dante *either* intended to refer to the King's youngest son, or to his eldest son under the mistaken idea that his Christian name was John, the text must of course remain unaltered, the word "Giovanni" must be retained.

We shall see a little later what reasons there are for supposing that Dante may *possibly* have intended to refer to the King's youngest son. If, however, as Dr. Moore considers is the case, he intended to refer to the eldest son, what reason is there

to induce us to suppose that while the historians of his time and all the subsequent commentators were under the belief that the eldest son's name was John—a mistaken belief that continued to exist for centuries after Dante's time, both in Italy and France—Dante had any better knowledge on that point than they, bearing in mind always that he could not get the name from anything Bertrand ever wrote, save the one incidental mention of the name "A'enrics"—not Henrics—to which attention has been called in an earlier part of this article, and which might so easily have been overlooked.

Beginning with Ginguenè and ending with Dr. Moore, the commentators who alter the text of the poem rely mainly—practically almost entirely—upon the argument that Dante well knew the facts of history. Speaking of Ginguenè's arguments, Arrivabene, who followed him, says: "Ginguenè made this correction" (the alteration from Giovanni to giovane) by "the light of his history, and he concluded that the line had undergone corruption."

"I cannot believe it to be possible that

Dante could have made a mistake on such a point as this," says Dr. Moore.

To these arguments it must be answered that, assuming that Dante had a good knowledge of history, it was of the history that was accessible to him, written and talked about in his own country, and in or before his own time. And that history told him, and those who lived for centuries after him, that the two persons were identical, the Young King and John.

One gets rid of the argument which is so much relied on by the commentators who have altered the text as to Dante's undoubted knowledge of Bertrand's poetry, and the Provençal biography, when the fact is recognized that in neither the one nor the other is any clue to be got to the Christian name of the young king. For anything that appears to the contrary in these writings, the name might very well have been John.

Dr. Moore states that in the rebellion of 1173 "John alone remained faithful to his father,"—a strange observation when it is remembered that at this time John was a

child in the nursery, just six years old! He adds that the young king "was (in the same rebellion of 1173) supported and assisted, if not indeed in the first instance prompted, to rebellion by Bertrand de Born," and one reads these words with absolute astonishment. One would like to know what authority there is for these statements. I have been able to find none. On the contrary, if one examines the great books of history that have been referred to, the Abbot of Peterboro', Roger Hoveden, Matthew Paris, Roger of Wendover, and Lord Lyttelton, there is every reason for believing that the rebellion of 1173 was entirely attributable to other people, and that Bertrand had nothing to do with it at all.

As to the two passages quoted by Dr. Moore from the Provençal biography of Bertrand (worthless as that biography is for any serious purposes of history) it is quite clear that the one refers to a period long subsequent to the rebellion of 1173, the other to the events of the year 1183, the year of the young king's death, in which contest, as has been pointed out, it was

King Henry who was the aggressor. Bertrand and the Lords of Aquitaine who had revolted with him against the tyranny of Richard simply stood by and supported his friend.

Again, Dr. Moore is mistaken in saying that Bertrand never writes of or to John during King Henry's life, for the stanza that has been referred to, the last line of which is :

“ Mas quan de Johan ses Terra ”

is proof to the contrary. This Sirvente had reference to a dispute that arose between King Henry and Richard, as to Richard's right to retain the Duchy of Aquitaine which the King wished to take away from him after Prince Henry's death and give as a present to John.

As to Dante's intimate acquaintance with Bertrand's poetry—a point much relied on by the commentators, who appear, erroneously, to imagine that Dante would have known from Bertrand's writings that the Christian name of the King's eldest son was not John—it may be assumed that

Dante probably was intimately acquainted with all that Bertrand ever wrote, but how, if Bertrand does not give the name of the young king, does that advance the argument in support of the alteration of the text of the poem? for it would be perfectly consistent with a complete knowledge of Bertrand's poetry to consider, and Dante may have considered, that the young king's Christian name was John.

Dr. Moore states that Bertrand used to call Prince Geoffrey "Rassa" (of which no explanation is offered), but surely it appears both from Raynouard's lexicon and from Bertrand's poems themselves,

" Rassa vilana tafura  
Plena d'enjan e d'usura ! "

that the meaning of "Rassa" is usurer, extortioner :

" No fazens trassa ni *rassa* ni monopili."

Statuts de Montpellier de 1204.

He adds that about John nothing is said in Bertrand's writings, apparently overlooking the Sirvente above referred to, in which he is referred to as John Lackland. He adds that Richard's nickname, "Oc e no,"

is a title of ambiguous meaning. Surely it is a name that indicates Richard's character, a person of great determination, who would be likely to give a very plain answer to any question put to him—Yes or no.

Dr. Moore next states that "Re Giovanni" would imply ignorance of history, as well as of Bertrand's poetry, and he adds it was only in the very last days of King Henry that John took part against him, and this brings us at once to the consideration whether it is not possible that Dante may have intended to refer expressly to the King's youngest son John. The following are facts of history from which inferences may be drawn.

At a great Council of State held at Oxford on the 11th of May, 1177, Prince John, the youngest son of King Henry, was constituted King of Ireland under a special permission from the Pope: "*Ibidem autem Dominus Rex Angliæ coram episcopis et Principibus Regni sui constituit Johannem, filium suum minorem Regem Hiberniæ.*" That is: "And there also our Lord the



King of England in the presence of the Bishops and the great Lords of his Kingdom, made his youngest son, John, King of Ireland."

And the ceremony derived a great additional picturesqueness from the fact that the Pope's legates—the Cardinals who brought the permission for the coronation—brought with them, as a present from the Pope, a crown of peacock's feathers set in or braided with gold. Couple this with the fact that, as appears from the several fifteenth and sixteenth century commentaries that have been referred to, Bertrand de Born was understood to be the Governor and adviser and counsellor of Prince John; and the further fact that it was John's cruel and heartless treachery and rebellion against his father that broke his father's heart and caused his death, or at any rate greatly hastened it. And it is not an altogether improbable conjecture that Dante (who wrote more than 100 years after these events)—putting this fact and that together—may have intended to refer expressly to John.

History tells us that the death-stricken King asked, in his last illness, that the names of the traitors who had deserted him and gone over to the King of France, should be read out to him, and that as his Chancellor read at the head of the list the name of Prince John, the King stopped him with the words: "Enough, enough, let things go now as they will. I care no more for myself nor for the world." And after two days of intense anguish and delirium he passed away.

There are surely some grounds, then, for supposing that Dante, knowing these things, may *possibly* by the word Giovanni have intended to refer to the King's youngest son who had been made King of Ireland, Prince John.

Before leaving the wide field of conjecture that such an inquiry as this of necessity forces on us, there is another point that has to be considered, viz.: What inference ought to be drawn from the fact that from the year 1472, when the first printed editions of the poem were issued, till the year 1811, when the text of the poem was first altered,

every known printed copy of the poem contained the word "Giovanni," while the word "giovane" was, as far as *all* the books go, a word unknown.

When the art of printing was invented in the fifteenth century, the best scholars and students of the day were doubtless occupied in examining the manuscripts of the "Divina Commedia" and in carefully arranging them for printing, and with entire unanimity they adopted the word "Giovanni." The famous Aldine books (of the beginning of the sixteenth century) contain that word—and the great commentary on the poem, by Cristoforo Landino, printed in Florence in the year 1481, in the time of Lorenzo de Medici—Lorenzo the Magnificent—the "father of letters"—as he has been called. Is it credible that he or the people around him in those great days of Italian literature and the arts, would have tolerated for one moment such a blunder as the printing of "Giovanni" for "giovane" in the poem, if blunder it were? Is it conceivable that Dante, or his sons who succeeded him, who were professional reciters of his

poems, or his admirers Boccaccio and Petrarch, would have permitted a blunder to remain upon the manuscripts, or that such a blunder could possibly have been unnoticed by the printers of the Aldine books?

And it should be borne in mind that not only did all the printers, and the scholars who worked with them and examined the manuscripts adopt the word "Giovanni" because they *saw* it in the manuscripts. They would probably know the word much better from *hearing* it constantly recited and declaimed—as was then the custom—in days before the art of printing had been invented, when the people of the country learnt everything by ear, and the art of reading was little known.

One more point before we pass away from the field of conjecture. Ginguenè—who is followed by Arrivabene—and Lord Vernon (1857) who is followed by Fraticelli (1860), maintain that the line should be—"Che al Re giovane diedi i ma' conforti." Ginguenè makes this alteration, to use Arrivabene's expression, "by the light of his history"

believing that the original word was "giovane" and that the line had undergone corruption, and his opinion has been adopted by Dr. Moore. In a most amusing fashion he draws attention to the fact that for hundreds of years the text of the poem had received no amendment. "Personne en Italie n'ait vu jusqu' à present dans ce vers une faute grave du Poète, ou *une* altération importante dans le text!" and seems to think that that alone argues the necessity for amendment! as if the poem were an ancient and ruinous building that of *necessity*, from its great age, must require to be—"restored"!

Dr. Moore says "I have no doubt Dante's original line stood :

" 'Che diedi al re giovan 'i mai conforti' "

a line for which, as regards the material words "giovan 'i," there appears to be no precedent, an altogether different line, it will be noticed, from Ginguenè's, Arrivabene's, Lord Vernon's and Fraticelli's — where "diedi" is made the fifth word in the line (and there are other variations), and suggests that the alteration from "giovane" to

"Giovanni" may have been made by a very early and inexperienced copyist.

Mr. Butler renders the line :

"Che diedi al Re giovane i mai conforti "

(a different line from either of the others), and says: "I feel pretty sure that Dante wrote originally 'Giovanni' and later (perhaps as a result of reading Bertrand's poems) got the name right."

We are still in the field of conjecture: which of the three altered lines, which of the reasonings of the different persons who propose these alterations, are we expected to prefer? Each of them containing, as they do, a combination of words which has been described as "being repugnant to every Italian ear—neither verse nor prose."

In an exceedingly able defence of the text against the proposed alteration, Scartazzini says: "*La lezione giovane guasta il verso,*" spoils the verse, and indeed a strong argument this is when one considers the circumstances of the case.

For the poem was composed in days when printing was unknown—and when manu-

scripts, and those who were able to read them, were very few.

It was intended therefore by Dante that the poem should be recited or declaimed in public places—at feasts and festivals, and in the great banqueting halls of the lords of the country—before the lord and his assembled retainers and guests.

It was doubtless in that way that the poet expected and wished that his work should become known to his countrymen—and throughout the world—and so in composing the poem he would of necessity pay great attention to its dramatic effect when recited or declaimed.

Now in the particular passage under consideration, it will be remembered that the vision of Bertrand appears at the bridge's foot, and that the words—the confession of his crime—are spoken to Dante and Virgil standing on the hill above him, and that the severed head was lifted high, and turned towards them, that the better they might hear, and the words are these:

“O me! Behold my grievous punishment  
thou who with breath of life dost walk the

earth and watch the dead. Now see—is any punishment as great as mine?” Then—(with *raised* voice, for this is the climax of the speech):

“ E perchè tu di me novella porti ;  
Sappi ch' i' son Bertram dal Bornio, quelli  
Che diedi all Re Giovanni mai conforti,  
I' feci 'l padre e' l figlio in sè ribelli.”

Here it would be all important to the dramatic effect of this splendid passage that the words from “Sappi” to the end of the third line “in sè ribelli” should be pronounced with raised voice and very emphatically, as in them is contained the climax of the story—the whole confession of the crime.

Then (with gradually lowered voice) Bertrand, in a fine comparison, resembles himself to Ahitophel who gave bad counsels to Absalom against his father, King David. He admits the justice of his punishment, and with these last words, “Thus is observed in me the retaliation that ever follows upon crime”—the shadow passes onwards to its doom—and Dante remained on the hill top, spell-bound at the sight, and other figures, threatening him, passed away unnoticed.



"Tu eri allor sì del tutto impedito  
Sopra colui che già tene Altaforte  
Che non guardasti in là ; sì fu partito."

"Thou wast, said Virgil, so wholly spell-bound at the sight of him who once was Lord of Altaforte — that thou look'st no other way till he was gone."

Surely if the proposed alteration of the text were allowed—if for the strong word "Giovanni" is substituted the weak word "giovane," the strength and beauty of the line is gone, and a train of thoughts about the "young king" is imported into the story. The passage is far too impressive—far too fine—to admit of the introduction of a sort of nickname into it. In such a passage such names are out of place. The Prince would surely be called by his proper name according to the belief of the poet—either Henry or John.

And now having wandered far and wide in the broad fields of conjecture, we return at last to the starting-point of this journey, and ask ourselves once more the question—under which King are we going to serve in

this matter? Under King Harry or King John?

And the sign posts are all pointing in the direction of King John.

For it is indisputable that one of two persons must have been referred to by Dante—either he who was once called King of Ireland, and afterwards known as King of England—King John. Or he who was known sometimes as the “Young King” “Rei Jove”—“Regiovane”—“Rex filius”—who by the people of Italy in Dante’s time, and for centuries after him, was known and designated (erroneously) by the same name—John.

And since King John has reigned in undisputed possession of the pages of all the books for hundreds of years together, why should his title now be questioned? To quote the words of a great authority—one of the greatest in this country—who was kind enough to send me not long ago his own views upon this subject: “I think the mere mutilation of the line (unless precedents can be shown) was a thing intolerable.”

There is a great Society in England in our time, "The Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings," and in view of the mutilation of the text of Dante's poem and possibly other mutilations of the like character of other books, it occurs to one that it might do well to extend the scope of its operations to the protection of the ancient books. For there can be no distinction in principle between a building and a book.

The same word expresses the maker, and the mode of construction of the one and the other by the workman,—that is "Conditor" the builder of a building, or the maker or composer of a book, "condo carmina," said Cicero, "I build or compose verses." "Condo historiam," said Pliny—"Homero condente." "Condiderunt," "they built" either the building or the book.

Westminster Abbey is a building erected, as to the greater part of it, by the son of King John, the nephew of the young King Harry, and in many of its finest parts it is of about the same age (thirteenth and fourteenth century) as its fellow building the "Divina Commedia." Let us test the

matter in that way. What would be thought of anyone who in these days upon a mere conjecture as to what the Abbey was like at some time before 1472 (the date of the first of the long and continuous series of the printed books that contain the word "Giovanni") were now to alter or "restore" it as not being, in his opinion, what the architects originally made it? Would such an interference with the building be tolerated for one moment? Well then, as with the building so let it be with the book.

There are many who value the old books with all their faults of history, and who value the old work the more for that with the rents and darns and unevenness of line, that are its ornaments, it is not all fashioned in the same exact and true but too often hard monotonous lines of to-day. To these it is pleasant to recall what was written—about the time of King Henry II. and King John—by one who was their friend, their father's friend, and Henry Beauclerc's, the first King Henry—about the value of the old books, "the books of the Clerk."

In a pretty prologue Wace, "of the

Isle of Jersey in the western sea appendant to the fief of Normandy," tells us that he is a historian. "I dwelt long at Caen," he says, "and there turned myself to making romances, of which I wrote many." "I talk to rich men," he says, "who have money, and it is for them the book is made and the tale well written down and told. But noblesse is dead and largesse hath perished with it, so that I have found none, travel where I will, who would bestow aught upon me save King Henry the Second. He gave me—God reward him for it—a prebend at Bayeux. He was grandson of the first King Henry and father of the third. Three Kings, Dukes and Kings, Dukes of Normandy and Kings of England, all three have I known, being a reading Clerk in their days."

And this is what Wace says about the value of old books :

"Por remembrer des ancessours  
Li fez è li diz è li mours  
Deit l'en li livres è li gestes  
E li estoires lire as festes  
Li felonies des félons,  
E li barnages des Barons.

Por ço firent bien assaveir,  
E grant pris durent cil aveir,  
Ki escristrent primierement,  
E li auçtor planièrement  
Ki firent livres è escriz  
Des nobles fez è des bons diz,  
Ke li Baron è li Seignor  
Firent de tems ancianor.  
Tornez fussent en obliance,  
Se ne fust tant de remembrance  
Ke li escripture nos fait  
Ki li estoires nos retrait.

Tote rien se torne en declin,  
Tot chiet, tot meurt, tot vait à fin ;  
Hom muert, fer use, fust porrist ;  
Tur font, mur chiet, rose flaistrit,  
Cheval tresbuche, drap viesist,  
Tote ovre fet od mainz perist.  
Bien entenz, è conoiz è sai  
Ke tuit morront è cler è lai,  
E mult ara lor renomée  
Emprez lor mort corte durée ;  
Se par cler ne est mise en livre,  
Ne pot par el durer ne vivre."

That is,—with some additional lines I have included in the translation—

"To commemorate the deeds, the sayings and the manners of our ancestors, to tell the felonies of the felons and the baronage of the Barons, men should read aloud

at feasts, the gests and histories of other times; and therefore they did well and should be highly prized and rewarded who first wrote books, and recorded therein the noble deeds and good words which the Barons and Lords did and said in days of old. Long since would those things have been forgotten, were it not that the tale thereof has been told, and their history duly recorded and put in remembrance by the Clerks.

“Many a City hath once been, and many a noble state, whereof we should now know nothing; and many a deed has been done in days of old, which would have passed from remembrance, if such things had not been written down, and read, and rehearsed by the Clerks.

“The fame of Thebes was great, Babylon was a famous city, Troy was of great power, and Nineveh a city broad and long, but who should now seek those great cities would scarce find their place.

“Nabugodonosor was a great King, he made an image of gold sixty cubits high, and six cubits broad, but he who should

now seek him ever so carefully would never find his bones: but thanks to the good Clerks, who have written for us in books the tales of ancient times, we know and can recall the marvellous works that were done in the days that have passed away.

“Alexander was a mighty king, he conquered twelve kingdoms in twelve years. Many lands had he and much wealth, he was a king of great power; but what did his conquests avail him? he was poisoned and died.

“Cæsar, whose deeds were so great, who conquered more of the world and possessed it than any man before or since could do, was at last slain by treason and fell in the Capitol.

“Both these mighty men, lords of so many lands, and who vanquished so many kings, at their deaths held no more of all their great possessions than—their bodies' length.

“What availed them, or how are they now the better for their rich booty, their wide conquests? It is only from what they have read, that men know that Alexander and



Cæsar have been, their names have endured many years, yet would they have been utterly forgotten long ago but that their story has been written down by the Clerk.

“All things hasten to decay; all fall, all perish, all come to an end, man dieth, iron consumeth, wood decayeth, towers crumble, strong walls fall down, the rose withereth; the war horse waxeth feeble, the gay trappings grow old; and all the works of men’s hands perish. Thus are we taught that all die, both clerk and lay; and short would be the fame of any after death, if their history did not endure by being written in the book of the clerk.”

To me at anyrate the reading of such lines as these brings with it a great feeling of respect and reverence for the ancient work—the ancient books—a feeling that it should be preserved exactly as we received it, intact and undisturbed.

Surely under all circumstances the landmarks of literature should be allowed to remain unaltered—the ancient words of any great and valued book should be left

to rest in peace. For consider what this nineteenth century fever of "restoration" would be likely to end in if allowed to run an unchecked course!

If the books of olden times are to be altered that their words may be made consistent with the facts of history, or of natural history, or of nature, or with literal truth of any kind—it is the same thing—endless alterations would be called for of the finest books. And, upon the same principle, of the finest pictures—that are the pride and delight of the country and the world.

Take (by way of example) three instances only out of thousands. In writing of flowers in the "Legend of Good Women," Chaucer tells us that:

"Eke eche at other threw the flowrës brighte  
The prymerose, the violet, and the marigold,"

which is an impossible combination of flowers—flowers of the autumn with those of early spring.

Again Spenser writes, in the "Prothala-

mion" when describing the appearance of the water meadows on a May morning:

"Of every sort which in that meadow grew  
They gathered some, the violet pallid blue,  
The little daisy, that at evening closes,  
The virgin lily, and the primrose true,  
With store of vermeil roses."

Here—as Chaucer did—Spenser places side by side flowers that are impossible—the vermeil roses and the white lilies, mid-summer flowers, with the dog violets and primroses, flowers of the early spring.

It is just the same with the pictures. How many of the finest pictures one remembers—pictures by Andrea Mantegna and Botticelli, to name but two of the greatest of the painters, in which flowers and fruit are painted side by side, that in Nature are impossible—flowers and fruits of the autumn with those of the spring.

But who would think of objecting to either the poetry of Chaucer or Spenser or to the pictures of Mantegna or Botticelli for such reasons as these?

Referring then to the lines from Shakespeare at the head of these comments we

answer that it is under King John, that we should stand in this matter, and not under King Harry: for it can hardly be doubted that, apart from all other reasons, if an ancient building has remained unaltered for more than three centuries, that alone is a sufficient reason why we should not, at this distance of time, seek to take anything from it now, or with light or irreverent hands to put upon it anything that is new.







